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ABSTRACT

Teenagers are a unique group of people regarded with as little seriousness as possible by some and with intense seriousness by others. Many of their problems, concerns, and needs are reflected through and can be observed in books; among these are parent relationships, the search for a belief or purpose in life, the unknown, the bizarre and supernatural, the occult, religion, the Jesus revolution, self-expression, ethnic identity and human dignity, rock music, drugs, women's struggles, and sex. The youth of today don't hesitate to question values. Books are needed which are designed for young adult readers--books that can answer the many needs of today's teenagers. (Included are several book descriptions and a list of 95 "Books to Meet the Needs of Teenagers.") (HOD)

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Topic of Meeting: LITERATURE FOR ADOLESCENTS

Topic of Paper: Books to Meet the Needs of Teen-Agers

There is probably no group that has been more superficial-  
ly analyzed, probed, been focused upon and virtually studied  
action by action, muscle by muscle, thought by thought than  
that of the current teen-age generation. Viewed upon as a  
unique entity teen-agers are regarded with as little serious-  
ness as possible by some and with intense seriousness by  
others. Madison Avenue is acutely aware of the affluence of  
the teen-age population. If the designers on the Avenue can  
make their product attractive enough to the 13-19 year old  
population, the charts go soaring. The Rand Youth Poll which for  
the past 20 years has been charting the fiscal habits of America's  
young people has come up with the following facts: Girls, 13-15  
spend \$6.10 a week compared to \$5.55 for boys in that same age  
group. At the 16-through 19-year-old level, girls spend \$18.90  
a week and boys \$17.25. (Newark Star Ledger, April 15, 1973)

With that buying potential it is no wonder the youth of today are regarded as a market to be catered to by business people the world over.

What are the "needs of teen-agers?" The question causes one to think about the facts as presented to us by those who create the statistics.

Often the adult generation views today's youth as "having it made." "When I was your age" ... is a frequent phrase and yet teen-agers seem to be crying out in opposition to any who feel they have the world by its tail.

In Los Angeles County teenage suicides have increased 100% during the past year. (Newark Star Ledger, January 28, 1973). Dr. Joseph D. Teicher of the University of Southern California School of Medicine has pointed out that a high percentage of suicide attempts eventually conclude in successful suicides.

Research at the Los Angeles County - USC Medical Center reveals that involvement in the following situations and circumstances preceded the adolescent's suicide attempt:

- 1) 40 percent had a parent, relative or close friend who attempted suicide.
- 2) 72 percent had one or both natural parents absent from home because of divorce, separation or death.
- 3) 84 percent of those with stepparents felt they were contending with an unwanted stepparent.
- 4) 58 percent had a parent who was married more than once.

- 5) 15 percent had serious problems because of at least one parent's alcoholism.
- 6) 50 percent of suicide attempters' families had a net income of \$3600 or less; half of these had a net annual income of \$2700 or less.
- 7) 62 percent had both parents working, or one working when there was only one parent in the family.
- 8) A large percentage lived with persons other than their parents. (Newark Star Ledger, January 28, 1973)

A portrait arises of the typical suicidal adolescent. It appears to be one of a teenager who early in life is painfully separated from important relationships and remains alone in his attempts to cope with the stress and strain of growing up.

In general, those problems fall into five categories: parents, poverty, peers, pregnancy and broken love affairs.

Many current teen-age novels deal with a parent relationship. If even as an incidental theme, it appears that Mom and Dad, or as in the case of Norma Klein's Mom, the Wolf Man and Me, the absence of a parent may be the major focus of the plot. Even families viewed by society as being "in tack" may evidence indifference to any hint of a crack in their beautifully constructed glass house as is evidenced in John Neufeld's Lisa, Bright and Dark, or M.E. Kear's Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack! Only drastic measures such as those taken by Mitch in leaving home when his family insists on going to Israel causes a family to reassess their knowledge of each other as is found in Molly Cone's You Can't Make Me If I Don't Want To. Perhaps it is the often repeated

current problem of father losing his job and mother discovering she is employable that will cause others to see themselves in Honor Arundel's A Family Failing. What a joy to see that the T. V. program slated for doom last fall has soared to the heights of the rating charts and that only last month (April, 1973) Avon Books published The Homecoming by Earl Hamner, Jr. in paperback. Once more we are reminded of the solidarity and warmth that can exist as a cohesive force within the nuclear family. Even within John Neufeld's Touching we have a supreme example of family concern. This book makes every reader wonder what small percentage of courage may remain within each one of us if confronted with the physical experiences of Twink.

Arthur Daigon and Ronald T. La Conte have tried to look at the younger generation and its relationship to the older generation in the book, Dig U.S.A. A very adaptable book in many varied situations, teaching and otherwise, the text contains actual documents, many pictorially given, which explore American youth today. The fact that Bantam has published it in paperback makes it appealing, but an even greater advantage is the fact that it has a very comprehensive and practical teacher's guide.

As young people search, we find them searching for a belief, a faith, a purpose in life. This search may end in death even as it is described in the book by Eliot Asinof, entitled Craig and Joan. This is the story of Craig Badiali and Joan Fox, two seventeen year olds who died October 15, 1969. This was a peace suicide via the car exhaust. October 15, 1969 was also Vietnam Moratorium Day in America. Two deaths - hopefully part of what

we experienced during March and April of 1973 when we saw our POW's coming home. A note from Craig revealed, in part, the why behind the deaths. "Why - because we love our fellow man enough to sacrifice our lives so that they will try to find the ecstasy in just being alive."

The longing to know this generation more fully has taken many forms. Two people that have personally researched a way of life as lived by the current generation are Lewis Yablonsky and Robert Houriet. Yablonsky who wrote The Hippie Trip wanted not to "study fish out of water," and so he went where the fish were. His lab was the streets of the hippie areas, hip communities, city "pads" and other social settings where the drama was being enacted. Houriet gives us an inside account of the communal scene in his book, Getting Back Together. In this account he set out to discover what these new pioneers wanted as they evidenced such complete rejection of our "plastic America". This book deals intimately with involvement in a commitment to forge alternate life - styles and make them work. The author traveled over a two year period, covering ten thousand miles and some fifty communal experiments.

And yet the search continues - for something beyond the tangible into an unknown world. This search is revealed in Dale Carlson's The Mountain of Truth as Michael Jordan is released into a mystic world - the order of the Children of the Mountain of Truth. One wonders if this is future or present as daily we have evidence of others who seek what Michael sought - the development of hidden powers in their minds to bring peace and human

betterment to the world.

The curiosity of many teen-agers into the strange and unreal world brings to mind an interesting new set of books.

Lippincott has a series called The Wierd and Horrible Library. This group of books deal with subjects strange and unnatural. The latest books to be added to this collection are Vampires and Werewolves by Nancy Garden and Magicians, Wizards and Sorcerers by Daniel Cohen. There are several new titles to be added next year, and among the subjects to be explored in future books are body snatchers, curses, hexes and spells, seances and spiritualists, and witches. It is a wise librarian and aware teacher who can keep up with Lippincott as they are providing us with a most complete collection of information on things bone-chilling, uncanny, ghoulish and bizarre.

While mentioning things uncanny, we must not forget to mention a book dealing with magic. Gary Jennings' Black Magic, White Magic deals with the beginnings of magic, and although no rabbits appear from the pages of this book the element of surprise is not lost. "But," as Jennings points out, "if, at the same time it gives you a new regard for common sense, tolerance and understanding - all qualities which magic has forever tried to forbid - then the book will have achieved its aim."

The occult is a most popular topic today and Petersen discusses sixteen new cults in his book, Those Curious New Cults. This book is a valuable guide to the never-never land of far-out religions and cults which are cropping up with regularity on

high school and college campuses today. It is written for young people and their parents who are looking for something to believe in.

Few can deny, although all are free to accept or reject, the growing presence of the Jesus revolution among our young people.

Richard Hanser has taken a historical approach in discussing the power and mystery of this personality which has lasted for twenty centuries. Jesus-What Manner of Man Is This? is a book published by Simon and Schuster, and this month, May, 1973, Delacorte Press is publishing The Jesus Song - a fictionalized account of a young person seeking religious truths. This book was written by Rozanne Knudson, of Zanballer fame. It would be remiss to discuss the Jesus revolution without mentioning Billy Graham's account entitled The Jesus Generation, written "to the young, about the young and for the young", but also for the older generation in helping them bridge the generation gap. A book considered to be one of the most accurate in reviewing the research on the Jesus movement is The Jesus People by Enroth, Ericson and Peters.

Not only is there a search for what to believe but a search by our youth for who they are - a cry for identity.

Young people are constantly told by their parents that identity comes by having material goods and possessing comes through work. We find the youth rejecting the Puritan ethic in favor of "hanging loose".

The American Medical Association has recently given youth some grist for their mill. As reported in The New York Times, March 10, 1973, the medical experts insist that the word ethic



is "dulling our marriages, destroying our environment, warping our values and taking all the fun out of life." They said that more emphasis should be put on love and play. It sounds like the A.M.A. has thrown open a pandora's box - one which will quickly try to be closed by many.

Poetry and music have always been a means of expressing our inner feelings. Ruby Dee in Glowchild and other Poems gives us an anthology of poems by young black writers who portray the problems of the "in-betweens" of any race. Designed for the urban disadvantaged communities it is especially designed for the 11-17 year old population.

Rae Alexander and Juluis Lester have told moving episodes from the lives of eight men and women that demonstrate what it is to be Young and Black in America. Powerfully done, the reader experiences what it is to be a black American,--not just to "understand" black America.

Richard Peck has edited Mindscales - Poems for the Real World, a collection of poems for everyone. He has also worked with Ned Hoopes to compile Edge of Awareness - 25 Contemporary Essays. Originally published in 1966 it went into its ninth printing in May of 1971. It is a group of nonfiction prose for readers who enjoy examining other people's perspectives on various aspects of our contemporary and complex world.

A new poetry text, but one whose value is legion, is Lyric Voices - Approaches to the Poetry of Contemporary Song as published by John Wiley and Sons, Inc. It challenges the reader to ask questions to help him probe and make his own conclusions about historical, aesthetic and cultural aspects of the new

lyric poetry.

Rock 'n' roll is a part of today's youth culture. The louder the better, for problems seemed lessened by the ninety-decibel chords of their music. It becomes a welcomed tranquilizer one which is legal and for which they don't need a prescription.

Rock 'n' roll has invaded the realms of higher education for there is currently a rock 'n' roll musical college founded nearly two years ago behind two store fronts at 2403 Ocean Avenue in San Francisco. It is the Blue Bear Waltzes School of Music. With 85 students, a staff of 15, a student-faculty band of 30 plus a tuition payment of \$40 a month they are in business. The key words are 'discipline for the development of expertise and improvisation for the composition of original music.' (Newark Star Ledger, January 14, 1973)

Rock lyrics reach the young and several books provide meaning to this particular phase of youth's interests. The Poetry of Rock, Rock Folk and The Poetry of Soul are among those books that can illustrate rock's distinctive strengths and weaknesses.

It is interesting to note here that Hitmakers of Hollywood, a promotion and record company is about to market its rock star trading cards. Similar to baseball and football cards, they are being test marketed in Los Angeles. If it catches on, national distribution will be arranged. Another indication of capitalizing on the spending of youth.

The fact of drugs is still a very real and shattering fact as we daily witness in print, as well as in person the effects of drugs on our society. The one book that has probably done more

within the past year to impress the reality of drugs upon our young people is the anonymously written diary, Go Ask Alice. Publishers cannot keep up with the orders, and the demand on Avon Books for the paperback is phenomenal. Teen-agers are looking for more diaries such as this one. There is an intrigue for the real diary of someone who has experienced life either within or beyond the reader's area of knowledge.

The need for identity comes from many directions and in many various ways. Everyone has this need; it is only now that young adult fiction is recognizing groups which have heretofore been stereotyped and not given separate attention in print.

We are currently undergoing a deluge of novels dealing with the Indian struggle for identity and recognition. James Forman in People of the Dream recorded the facts behind Chief Joseph's Nez Percé people. Changes came with the gold miner, the settlers, and the army of the white man. This book is the desperate attempt on the part of Joseph for peace and freedom and is a shameful account of American injustice to the Indian. It makes what is happening today at Wounded Knee, South Dakota very real and purposeful. Zach by John Craig is the story of Zach, Willie Matson, a young black who has been alienated from white society, and D. J. a rebellious young girl who is rejecting her middle-class beginnings as they search for a place of belonging and for individual identity.

One wants to step into the pages of the book Number Four by Molly Cone and stop the action as the events unfold in the life of Benjamin Turner. An Indian, he is slated to be only the

fourth Indian to graduate under the principalship of Gregory E. Haley (hence, the title). The 90% dropout rate among Indian students before their senior year at Douglas High School was just "one of those things." Or was it?

Chief by Frank Bonham is a fight for human dignity in general; Indian dignity in particular. Henry Crowfoot was known as Chief, but also known as one who wanted an education and moved from the reservation to Harbor City to obtain it. The hope and yearning almost seem to rip out of the book into the reader's being as his book is read.

Marion E. Gridley has compiled in the book, Contemporary American Indian Leaders the story of twenty-six Indian leaders of current times, activists as well as conservatives, young and old. All of these form a portrait of achievement. The opinions of each of these leaders causes the reader to gain considerable insight into Indian feeling behind current situations. This book is one of twenty books published by the author on Indian subjects.

Someone has recently stated that the 70's are to become the decade of woman's struggle for and, in many cases success in, recognition and equality of opportunity in all areas of life - from preschool toys, on up. Indeed, it appears that publishers are providing us with a wealth of printed material on women's struggle for equality.

The bibliography identifies some of the biographies currently of interest in this area. One cannot overlook a delightfully fast moving fictionalized account of the female struggle for equality as portrayed in the book entitled, Zanbaler.

Suzanne Hagen wanted to play football and used every ingenious effort within her power to achieve this goal.

Feminine Plural - Stories by Women About Growing Up published by Macmillan is a description of the transition from girlhood to womanhood dispelling many of the popular myths to which we are exposed. Youth is supposed to have all the joys of life within its few short years - or does it? With the reassessment of women in society this book is demanding of our attention.

Powerfully written is Janet Harris' book A Single Standard. The facts are well documented and the writing is superb. Karen De Crow has provided a must in duplicate for every library. The Young Woman's Guide To Liberation is her paperback which is a handbook on how to break through the established barriers. Based on the premise that the 1970's are indeed the decade of the women it gives hope and encouragement to every aspiring female.

Two recent publications must be mentioned, although only space and time prevent a detailed description of all those listed on the bibliography. Mary Clarke's Bloomers & Ballots is the story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her fight for women's right to vote. This book is based on careful and thorough historical research. Historical evidence to this movement is given in Olivia Coolidge's Women's Rights - The Suffrage Movement in America, 1848-1920.

In reaching for identity we must also realize the struggle within youth for analyzing and coping with many new and varied emotions. There are two books which deal with homosexuality that are especially worthy of mention.

Lynn Hall is the author of Sticks and Stones and Isabelle Holland is the originator of The Man Without a Face. Homosexuality is more openly confronted in the latter book and the story of the need for love and the fulfillment of that need is beautifully told. Sticks and Stones is a story of guilt by association. It is the damnation by a small town of one boy and the ruination of a life because no one questioned the rumor, just accepted it.

The change that is socially being felt regarding sexual matters is an undeniable fact. To look at books, movies, plays - tells it all. Even Time magazine's description of "The Last Tango" caused raised eyebrows as to whether that much news was necessary! (January 22, 1973) It is interesting to note that it was in 1932 that an American newspaper, The New York Daily News first carried the word "syphilis" in print. In 1936 Surgeon General Thomas Parran first uttered the word on the radio. In 1949 The New York Herald Tribune was first to use the word "masturbation." In 1959 we found the beginnings of sober discussions of homosexuality in the mass media, some<sub>^</sub> which were almost objective. Now it is difficult not to find these subjects treated freely and openly.

Adolescent fiction has not ignored the fact that sexual activity does occur, and writers of teen-age novels are not remiss in their attention to it.

Sidney Offit's Only a Girl Like You openly describes the actions of Christine, a "free spirit," who freely gives sex without love. It is interesting that one of her sex objects is seventeen year old Sam, and how she manipulates him into a stereotyped female role-passive, vulnerable and hungry for commitment. Peter Burchard in A Quiet Place presents the current conflict of back-to-earth versus glamour and technology. The reader is left with the often unanswered question, "Are there men who are both exciting and good?"

The actions of many people have been affected by the development of the birth control pill. Even in countries traditionally known for strict parental guidance, teen-agers are not waiting for marriage to engage in sex relations.

The National Police Agency of Japan reports that sex crimes are on the rise everywhere. Last year, 4,419 Japanese females, "including a fairly large number of high school students, were arrested for engaging in prostitution." (Newark Star Ledger, February 4, 1973)

The government of Great Britain has recently released some statistical data which indicates a highly permissive society. Three out of every five teenaged brides are pregnant at their wedding and a quarter of all births to teenaged girls are illegitimate. (Newark Star Ledger, January 14, 1973)

California had such a problem with girls dropping out of high school to have babies that they have instituted a special program to enable them to continue in school.

Sex is dealt with powerfully and accurately in teen-age fiction today. Love and sex are often combined as in His Own Where by June Jordan. In this book Ms. Jordan describes the lives of Buddy and Angela, two black young people whose struggle for identity is combined with that of existing.

It is refreshing to see books that have stopped spending 128 of their 130 pages moralizing and have started to provide some insightful information on the alternatives involved for those who find themselves in non-establishment situations.

The second best-selling Beacon Press hardcover book in the year which ended June 30, 1972 is the book by Ruth I. Pierce entitled, Single and Pregnant. This is a book that should be found in every library in America. In this book the author carefully outlines each possible solution that an unwed pregnant girl can take - abortion, adoption, marriage or single parenthood. The problems involved in each choice are frankly discussed and the appendix references include those for abortion referrals, planned parenthood affiliates, maternity and infant care projects, as well as a bibliography of suggested books for future readings.

What really is happening among our youth culture today? Five years ago we were saying that teen-age sex is mostly talk but a number of major studies have revealed that there is a lot more going on among teen-agers than just conversation.

Dr. Eleanor B. Luckey, child development specialist of the University of Connecticut made a study of 21 U. S. campuses in 1969. It revealed that 43.2 percent of the coeds surveyed had experienced intercourse before they finished college. This



study is the most current national survey of its kind. (Ladies Home Journal, February, 1973)

It has been difficult to conduct research on the sexual behavior of high-school students because parents and school officials often raise objections when such surveys are attempted. However, Drs. Melvin Zelnik and John F. Kantner of Johns Hopkins University have just completed a major study for the U. S. Commission on Population Growth. In a probability sample of unmarried U. S. teen-age girls, the researchers found that 14 percent of the 15-year-olds, and up to 46 percent of the 19-year olds reported having had sexual relations. Last year in New York City almost 3,000 girls dropped out of high school because of pregnancy. For every 100 American girls between the ages of 15 and 19 an average of two gave birth to an illegitimate child last year. (Ladies Home Journal, February, 1973)

This activity leads to another concern - one that is epidemic in proportion. It is that of venereal disease.

The discussion of venereal disease has been widespread and is aimed at a variety of audiences. The New York Times (Magazine Section) November 7, 1971 ran a feature article by Cokie and Steven V. Roberts entitled, "The Venereal Disease Pandemic." The PTA Magazine, April, 1973 discusses venereal disease as a possibility among its readers daughters in an article entitled, "The Dark Side of Venus." The most recent and open discussion of V.D. was aired in the fall of 1972 and the spring of 1973 over Public Broadcast Service entitled, "V.D. Blues."

This T.V. broadcast was outspoken even by the more liberal standards of public television. It has been categorized by some as a rather "daring experiment," openly challenging taboos, bringing V.D. out of the closet and into the clinic.

This month, May, 1973, Avon Books has published the entire script of the T.V. broadcast plus the transcript of V.D. Hotline which followed the program when it was televised. Selling for \$.95 the paperback is simply entitled, V.D. Blues. I'm sure the facts will be ignored by many, and for some of the same reasons we find it so difficult to conduct research among teen-agers, we'll have opposition to having this on our high school shelves. However, it meets a need, and if we as educators overlook any need we are falling short of our responsibility in dealing with the youth of today.

Our young people today are unique, for many reasons. One of these reasons is that they don't hesitate to question values. They demand to know whether "established" values are appropriate to today's youth culture.

It goes without saying that the needs of teen-agers are far beyond those covered in this paper. Humor, historical novels, fantasies, mysteries, adventure stories are also needed on the shelves designed for the young adult reader.

It has often been said that "we can't win them all." I would like to respond to that by adding, "We can't afford to lose any!"

## BOOKS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF TEENAGERS

A bibliography prepared by Dr. Carolyn W. Carmichael

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